



Pork Barrel Politics:

14 Republican Members of Congress
Vote to Keep their own Farm
Subsidies but Fail to Extend
Nutrition Aid for
Low-Income Families

A Report | July 2013

Prepared by the Office of Congressman George Miller (D-CA)



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Summary

New analysis finds that 14 members of Congress voted to continue farm subsidies from which they personally benefit while failing to continue nutrition aid for 47 million Americans. These members of Congress:

- Are each Republicans;
- Have a total net worth of up to \$124.5 million;
- Have received a total of at least \$7.2 million in farm subsidies;
- Each previously voted to gut the SNAP program by giving states large financial incentives to kick families off SNAP.

Analysis

14 members of Congress with a combined net worth of up to \$124.5 million voted last week to continue farm subsidies from which they personally benefit while allowing authorization for nutrition programs for low-income individuals and families, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), to expire this year. These members of Congress—each of them Republican—and their spouses have received a total of over \$7.2 million in farm subsidies since 1995.

Since 1973, Congress has always included both farm subsidies and nutrition aid in the Farm Bill, but after an embarrassing defeat on the House Floor late last month, House Republican leadership stripped the entire

Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition Aid for Low-Income Families

nutrition title from the new Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act that narrowly passed the House with only Republican support. “By splitting farm policy from food stamps, the House effectively ended the decades-old political marriage between urban interests concerned about nutrition and rural areas that depend on farm subsidies,” wrote Ron Nixon and Jonathan Weisman of the New York Times.¹

The resulting FARRM Act now provides \$196 billion in farm subsidies, largely to the wealthiest farmers and large agribusiness firms. In contrast, 47 million Americans are at risk of losing access to SNAP benefits if the program isn’t reauthorized, as is the case under this FARRM Act.

The 14 Republican members of Congress who voted for the FARRM Act and personally receive government subsidies have received an average of \$515,279 in benefits, according to a database maintained by the Environmental Working Group. Rep. Stephen Fincher (R-TN) alone has accumulated nearly \$3.5 million in subsidies. However, these figures should be considered a low-end estimate. While commodity, disaster, and conservation assistance programs disclose their recipients, federal law currently prohibits the names of recipients of crop insurance premium support from being disclosed. This lack of transparency means that it is impossible to know whether these and other members of Congress have received subsidies from the crop insurance premium support program, or how much. As a result of this reporting loophole, it is possible that, once crop insurance premium support is taken into account,

Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition Aid for Low-Income Families

these 14 members have received considerably more than the \$7.2 million in handouts this report details.

In stark contrast, SNAP, which each member detailed in this report voted against extending, is limited to families with an income below the federal poverty line (\$19,530 for a family of three). In fact, the average SNAP household has a gross monthly income of only \$744, and their average monthly SNAP benefit is just \$281.

“The role of citizens, of Christians, of humanity is to take care of each other, but not for Washington to steal from those in the country and give to others in the country.”

- Rep. Stephen Fincher (R-TN)

In addition to voting to continue assistance for themselves and other wealthy farmers while failing to reauthorize nutrition programs for the poor, each of these 14 members of Congress voted in favor of the Southerland Amendment, largely credited with sinking an earlier version (H.R. 1947) of the FARRM Act last month. That amendment—which Republicans added to a version of the FARRM Act which would have already made deep cuts to SNAP and cut eligibility for 2 million Americans—would have completely gutted SNAP by giving states large financial incentives to kick families off of the program.ⁱⁱ

As this report illustrates, the wealthy and well-connected have benefited substantially from farm

*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition
Aid for Low-Income Families*

subsidies. To ensure that benefits instead go where they are needed, this year's farm bill should increase transparency in farm assistance, end subsidies for the wealthiest Americans and continue to combat hunger.

It is time for Congress to enact a farm bill that maintains a strong safety net to help families buy food and get back on their feet—not one that provides large subsidies to wealthy farmers and agribusiness while leaving tens of millions of working Americans out in the cold.

“But the takeaway is that the Republicans once again favor welfare for the rich and politically connected while opposing it for the poor and others unrepresented by K Street lobbyists. Needless to say, it’s unclear that naked redistribution to benefit GOP clients is preferable to such redistribution on behalf of Democratic constituencies.”

-W. James Antle, The American Conservative

Recommendations

It is deeply alarming that some members of Congress are voting to provide themselves and wealthy special interests substantial farm subsidies while allowing authorization for effective and badly-needed nutrition programs that benefit 47 million people across the country to expire. The core purpose of the farm bill is not to provide benefits to well-connected individuals and corporations but to ensure that all Americans have access to a stable and safe food supply. When millions of

Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition Aid for Low-Income Families

families lose access to nutrition benefits and can no longer afford a decent supply of food, it is clear that the farm bill is failing that purpose.

Several steps are needed to address this problem:

- Pass a farm bill that maintains support for strong nutrition programs
- Provide additional transparency into crop insurance payments
- End subsidies for the wealthiest Americans

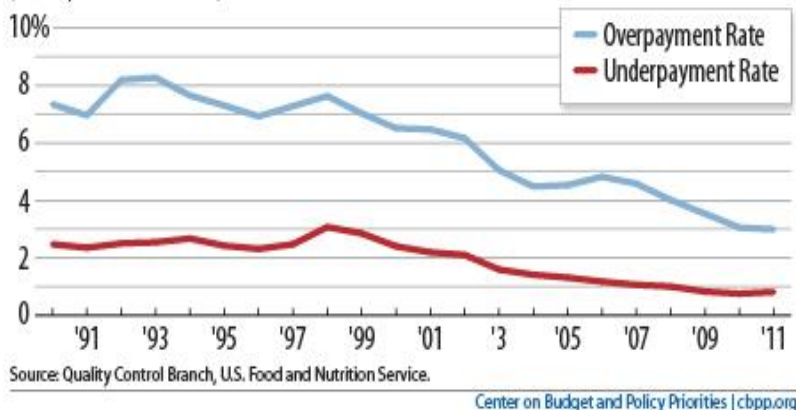
Pass a Farm Bill that Maintains Support for Strong Nutrition Programs:

Numerous studies have shown that SNAP and other nutrition programs have substantially reduced hunger across America and are providing badly needed benefits to families who have hit hard times. Additionally, SNAP has a strong countercyclical impact that is largely credited with lessening the blow of the recession that began in 2007. According to University of Kentucky economics professor James Ziliak, SNAP has “proven to be a key automatic stabilizer for this nation that’s assisting not only the poor, but the near poor.”ⁱⁱⁱ New research finds that SNAP also provides long-term benefits by improving infant health, increasing high school attainment and increasing lifetime earnings.^{iv}

Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition Aid for Low-Income Families

SNAP Error Rates Are at an All-Time Low

(Fiscal years 1990-2011)



And due to innovative quality programs authorized in the 2008 Bipartisan Farm Bill, SNAP payment accuracy is at all-time highs. Furthermore, farmers are one of the largest and most direct beneficiaries of SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs through the increased food purchasing power allowed to the working poor.

Congress should not pull the rug out from under these 47 million Americans, but should instead support programs that provide crucial support that prevents hunger and helps families get back on their feet.

Provide Additional Transparency into Crop Insurance Payments:

Although this report uncovered millions of dollars in farm subsidies paid to members of Congress, it is likely that these members actually receive substantially more than reported in federal subsidies. While this report includes an analysis of data on payments through commodity, disaster and conservation programs, it does not include an analysis of crop insurance premium

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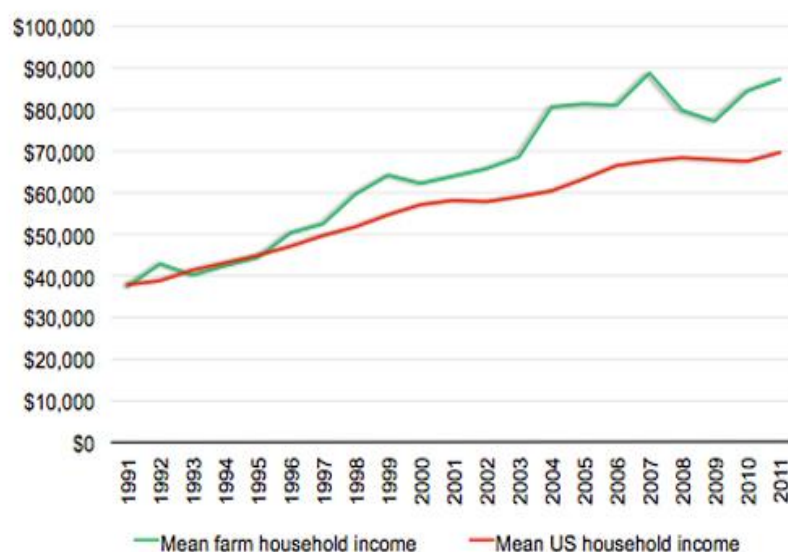
support because current law prohibits the disclosure of those payments— a serious reporting loophole.

According to analysis by the Environmental Working Group, 26 policyholders received more than \$1 million each in crop insurance premium support in 2011, yet there is no way to know who those people are or whether any of them are, in fact, themselves members of Congress.^v

Crop insurance premium support should not be held to a different standard than other farm subsidy programs.

Disclosure of the identity of recipients of crop insurance premium support will give Americans transparency into who benefits from crop insurance premium support and how much, and will better allow Congress to identify whether the wealthiest Americans receive undue benefit from this support.

Farm Household Income vs. US Household Income, 1991–2011



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, "Median Farm Household Income Forecast Up in 2012 and 2013," accessed May 15, 2013, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-household-well-being/farm-household-income.aspx>.

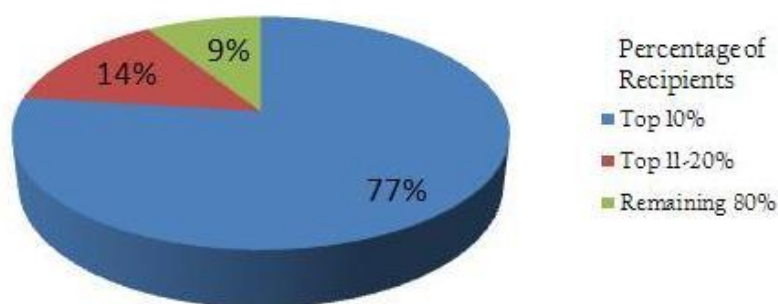
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Aid for Low-Income Families*

End Subsidies for the Wealthiest Americans:

Providing unnecessary subsidies to multi-millionaires and big agribusiness is unnecessary, wasteful, and even counterproductive by driving small family farmers out of business.

Ending subsidies for the wealthiest farmers will substantially lessen the conflicts of interest facing members of Congress whose major donors receive these benefits or who themselves receive these generous subsidies.

**Over 3/4 of Commodity Subsidies
Went to 10% of Recipients in 2012**



Source: Environmental Working Group Analysis of 2012 Data

Moreover, because just 10 percent of subsidized farms have received the lion's share (75 percent) of all subsidies since 1995, it is clear that many of these payments are chronically misallocated and could be put to better use through other programs or by reducing the deficit

*See the following pages for profiles of the 14 members of Congress who voted to
continue their own farm subsidies while failing to continue nutrition aid for 47 million
Americans.*

*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition
Aid for Low-Income Families*

Member Profiles

*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
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Rep. Robert Aderholt

Republican—Alabama 4th District

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$207,426](#)^{vi*}

Net Worth: [\\$506,019 to \\$5,815,999](#)^{vii}

Individuals in Aderholt's home county, Winston County, receiving SNAP Benefits: [4,201](#) (16% of Winston County's population)^{viii}

Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut SNAP: Rep. Aderholt voted YES on an amendment to gut the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that cut off families' benefits.^{ix}

Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. Aderholt voted YES to provide farm subsidies for himself while allowing authorization to expire for nutrition programs including SNAP.^x

*Total subsidies do not include any possible federal payments for crop insurance premium support programs.

*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
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Rep. Blake Farenthold

Republican—Texas 27th District

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$1,205*](#)

Net Worth: [\\$9,659,099 to \\$38,785,999](#)

Individuals in Farenthold's home county, Nueces County, receiving SNAP Benefits: [68,655](#) (19% of Nueces County's population)

Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut SNAP: Rep. Farenthold voted YES on an amendment to gut the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that cut off families' benefits.

Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. Farenthold voted YES to provide farm subsidies for himself while allowing authorization to expire for nutrition programs including SNAP.

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Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition
Aid for Low-Income Families*



Rep. Stephen Fincher

Republican—Tennessee 8th District

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$3,483,824*](#)

Net Worth: [-\\$1,149,999 to \\$204,995](#)

Individuals in Fincher's home county, Crockett County, receiving SNAP Benefits: [3,370](#) (22% of Crockett County's population)

Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut SNAP: Rep. Fincher voted YES on an amendment to gut the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that cut off families' benefits.

Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. Fincher voted YES to provide farm subsidies for himself while allowing authorization to expire for nutrition programs including SNAP.

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Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition
Aid for Low-Income Families*



Rep. Vicky Hartzler

Republican—Missouri 4th District

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$516,000*](#)

Net Worth: [\\$2,218,026 to \\$13,854,995](#)

Individuals in Hartzler's home county, Cass County, receiving SNAP Benefits: [8,664](#) (9% of Cass County's population)

Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut SNAP: Rep. Hartzler voted YES on an amendment to gut the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that cut off families' benefits.

Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. Hartzler voted YES to provide farm subsidies for himself while allowing authorization to expire for nutrition programs including SNAP.

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Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition
Aid for Low-Income Families*



Rep. John Kline

Republican—Minnesota 2nd District

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$6,548*](#)

Net Worth: [\\$248,009 to \\$645,000](#)

Individuals in Kline's home county, Dakota County,
receiving SNAP Benefits: [23,736](#) (5% of Dakota
County's population)

Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut
SNAP: Rep. Kline voted YES on an amendment to gut
the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that cut
off families' benefits.

Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. Kline voted YES to provide
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*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition
Aid for Low-Income Families*



Rep. Doug LaMalfa

Republican—California 1st District

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$1,710,385*](#)

Net Worth: [\\$1,268,007 to \\$5,596,000](#)

Individuals in LaMalfa's home county, Butte County, receiving SNAP Benefits: [27,457](#) (11% of Butte County's population)

Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut SNAP: Rep. LaMalfa voted YES on an amendment to gut the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that cut off families' benefits.

Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. LaMalfa voted YES to provide farm subsidies for himself while allowing authorization to expire for nutrition programs including SNAP.

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*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition
Aid for Low-Income Families*



Rep. Tom Latham

Republican—Iowa 3rd District

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$313,776*](#)

Net Worth: [\\$2,315,175 to \\$7,650,167](#)

Individuals in Latham's home county, Franklin
County, receiving SNAP Benefits: [1,100](#) (10% of
Franklin County's population)

**Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut
SNAP:** Rep. Latham voted YES on an amendment to gut
the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that cut
off families' benefits.

Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. Latham voted YES to provide
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*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
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Aid for Low-Income Families*



Rep. Frank Lucas

Republican—Oklahoma 3rd District

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$40,613*](#)

Net Worth: [-\\$264,990 to \\$1,059,995](#)

Individuals in Lucas's home county, Roger Mills County, receiving SNAP Benefits: [248](#) (6% of Roger Mills County's population)

Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut SNAP: Rep. Lucas voted YES on an amendment to gut the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that cut off families' benefits.

Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. Lucas voted YES to provide farm subsidies for himself while allowing authorization to expire for nutrition programs including SNAP.

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*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition
Aid for Low-Income Families*



Rep. Cynthia Lummis

Republican—Wyoming At-Large

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$14,289*](#)

Net Worth: [\\$7,252,036 to \\$30,584,999](#)

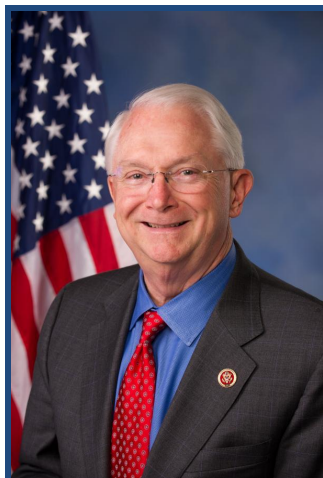
Individuals in Lummis's home county, Laramie County, receiving SNAP Benefits: [5,817](#) (7% of Laramie County's population)

Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut SNAP: Rep. Lummis voted YES on an amendment to gut the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that cut off families' benefits.

Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. Lummis voted YES to provide farm subsidies for himself while allowing authorization to expire for nutrition programs including SNAP.

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*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition
Aid for Low-Income Families*



Rep. Randy Neugebauer

Republican—Texas 18th District

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$4,321](#)*

Net Worth: [\\$6,560,080 to \\$19,129,998](#)

**Individuals in Neugebauer's home county, Lubbock
County, receiving SNAP Benefits: [46,408](#) (16% of
Lubbock County's population)**

**Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut
SNAP: Rep. Neugebauer voted YES on an amendment to
gut the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that
cut off families' benefits.**

**Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. Neugebauer voted YES to
provide farm subsidies for himself while allowing
authorization to expire for nutrition programs including
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*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition
Aid for Low-Income Families*



Rep. Kristi Noem

Republican—South Dakota At-Large

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$503,751*](#)

Net Worth: [-\\$464,992 to \\$674,999](#)

Individuals in Noem's home county, Hamlin County, receiving SNAP Benefits: [462](#) (7% of Hamlin County's population)

Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut SNAP: Rep. Noem voted YES on an amendment to gut the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that cut off families' benefits.

Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. Noem voted YES to provide farm subsidies for himself while allowing authorization to expire for nutrition programs including SNAP.

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*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition
Aid for Low-Income Families*



Rep. Marlin Stutzman

Republican—Indiana 3rd District

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$196,268*](#)

Net Worth: [\\$14,019 to \\$1,082,995](#)

Individuals in Stutzman's home county, Lagrange
County, receiving SNAP Benefits: [2,116](#) (5% of
Lagrange County's population)

**Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut
SNAP:** Rep. Stutzman voted YES on an amendment to
gut the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that
cut off families' benefits.

Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. Stutzman voted YES to provide
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*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
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Aid for Low-Income Families*



Rep. Mac Thornberry

Republican—Texas 13th District

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$29,774](#)*

Net Worth: [\\$241,007 to \\$580,000](#)

Individuals in Thornberry's home county, Potter
County, receiving SNAP Benefits: [28,779](#) (23% of
Potter County's population)

Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut
SNAP: Rep. Thornberry voted YES on an amendment to
gut the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that
cut off families' benefits.

Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. Thornberry voted YES to
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*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
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Aid for Low-Income Families*



Rep. David Valadao

Republican—California 21st District

Total Farm Subsidies Received: [\\$185,724*](#)

Net Worth: [-\\$30,099,998 to -\\$1,150,005](#)

Individuals in Valadao's home county, Kings County, receiving SNAP Benefits: [21,938](#) (13% of Kings County's population)

Vote on Southerland Amendment to H.R. 1947 to Gut SNAP: Rep. Valadao voted YES on an amendment to gut the SNAP program by giving subsidies to states that cut off families' benefits.

Vote on H.R. 2642: Rep. Valadao voted YES to provide farm subsidies for himself while allowing authorization to expire for nutrition programs including SNAP.

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Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to Keep Farm Subsidies for Themselves, but Fail to Extend Nutrition Aid for Low-Income Families

ⁱ Weisman, Jonathan, and Ron Nixon. "House Republicans Push Through Farm Bill, Without Food Stamps." *New York Times*. 11 July 2013.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/12/us/politics/house-bill-would-split-farm-and-food-stamp-programs.html?pagewanted=all>

ⁱⁱ See June 20, 2013 statement by Center on Budget and Policy Priorities President Robert Greenstein, "House Wisely Rejects Farm Bill with Stunning, Extreme Provision to Pay States to Cut Families Off SNAP Because They Can't Find Jobs" at <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3979>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Zedlewski, Sheila, Elaine Waxman and Craig Gundersen. "SNAP's Role in the Great Recession and Beyond." The Urban Institute. July 2012. Accessed at <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412613-SNAPs-Role-in-the-Great-Recession-and-Beyond.pdf>.

^{iv} Hoynes, Hilary W. and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach. "The Safety Net: An Investment in Kids." Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity. July 1, 2013. Accessed at <http://www.spotlightonpoverty.org/ExclusiveCommentary.aspx?id=9e02413a-a348-417d-9770-b627bbc9e181>.

Cover Image Credit: Getty Images

^v See <http://www.ewg.org/release/members-congress-received-238k-farm-subsidies>.

^{vi} All data on farm subsidies received by members of Congress and their spouses is based on analyses by the Environmental Working Group, which can be found at <http://www.ewg.org/release/members-congress-received-238k-farm-subsidies> and <http://www.ewg.org/news/news-releases/2012/06/28/taxpayers-paid-61-million-farm-subsidies-members-congress-families>.

^{vii} All data on members' net worth is based on information provided in the Center for Responsive Politics' reporting of lawmakers' net worth in 2011, which can be found at <http://www.opensecrets.org/pfds/overview.php?type=W&year=2011>.

^{viii} All data on SNAP recipients by county comes from the USDA Economic Research Service's SNAP Time Series Data and can be accessed through http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/map_of_the_week/2013/04/food_stamp_recipients_by_county_an_interactive_tool_showing_local_snap_data.html.

^{ix} See House Roll Call No. 284: <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll284.xml>.

*Pork Barrel Politics: 14 Republican Members of Congress Vote to
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Aid for Low-Income Families*

^x See House Roll Call No. 353: <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll353.xml>.

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